

Extreme Recipe Makeovers: From Eliane Magee, MPH, RD...aka "The Recipe Doctor"

Here are some great tips Elaine calls her "commandments of healthy cooking" that can take a recipe from nutritional nightmare to diet delight by substituting a few ingredients...but keeping the all the taste!

1. **In most bakery recipes (muffins, cakes, cookies, coffee cakes, bars, brownies, nut breads, etc.) you can substitute whole wheat for two-thirds or one-half the white flour called for.** Compared to 1/4 cup of white flour, each 1/4 cup of whole-wheat flour adds 3.5 grams of fiber and various phytochemicals, and doubles the amount of magnesium and selenium. The extra fiber helps slow digestion and increase fullness.
2. **In most bakery recipes, you can reduce the sugar called for by one-fourth without a big difference in taste and texture.** For example, instead of adding 1 cup of sugar, you can add 3/4 cup. Or, if you like using Splenda, you can replace half of the sugar called for with Splenda (or a similar alternative sweetener approved for use in baking). This cuts the calories from sugar by 48 calories for every tablespoon of sugar you take out or replace with Splenda.
3. **In egg dishes (quiches, frittatas, omelets, breakfast casseroles), you can use egg substitute in place of half the eggs.** In other words, if the recipe calls for six eggs, you would blend three whole eggs with 3/4 cup egg substitute (1/4 cup of egg substitute replaces each egg). You can replace half the eggs in bakery recipes with egg substitute as well. By replacing one large egg with 1/4 cup egg substitute, you'll shave 45 calories, 5 grams of fat, 1.6 grams of saturated fat, and 213 milligrams of cholesterol. If you don't like to use egg-substitute products, you can also use egg whites for half of the eggs called for.
4. **In many bakery recipes, you can cut the fat ingredient (butter, margarine, shortening, or oil) in half.** In other words, if a cake recipe calls for 1 cup of butter or margarine, you can usually use 1/2 cup instead. Remember to replace the missing fat with a similar amount of a moist but healthy ingredient (fat-free sour cream, orange juice, low-fat yogurt, applesauce, etc.) This change cuts both fat and calories, since each gram of fat translates into 9 calories as opposed to 4 per gram for protein or carbohydrate.
5. **Cook with reduced-fat or fat-free products when available -- and when they taste good.** Try fat-free sour cream, fat-free half-and-half, reduced-fat cheeses, light cream cheese, light mayonnaise, extra lean meat without skin or visible fat, reduced-fat or light sausage, less-fat turkey bacon, light salad dressings, and light margarine for frosting. Many cut calories and saturated fat along with total fat. A few fat-free products are in my arsenal as well: fat-free sour cream and half-and-half, chicken broth, wine, strong coffee, fruit purees, and fruit juice. These foods add moisture, and sometimes flavor, to recipes where you aren't using a lot of fatty ingredients.

6. **Never deep-fry when you can oven-fry or pan-fry with a lot less oil.** Choose canola oil or olive oil, and use about 1/2 teaspoon per serving (depending on the item). When you pan-fry or oven-fry in a controlled amount of oil, you can cut a lot of the fat and calories your food would soak up if it were submerged in hot oil. For every tablespoon of oil you cut, you'll save 120 calories and 13.5 grams of fat.

7. **Use whole grains in your recipes whenever possible.** We've already talked about whole-wheat flour, but you can also substitute brown rice for white rice, add barley to stews and casseroles, and look for recipes that call for oats. There are also multigrain blends and whole-wheat pastas to choose from in supermarkets now. Whole grains offer a plethora of health benefits, plus fiber to fill you up. One-fourth cup of dry brown rice contributes 2 grams of fiber and a 2-ounce serving of dry multigrain spaghetti adds 4 grams or more of fiber to your diet.

8. **Extra ingredients and embellishments can often be removed or cut in half.** If a recipe calls for chocolate chips, you can use less. If it calls for dotting your casserole or pie with butter, you can skip this step. In a cake recipe, you can use half the original amount of frosting (in a double-layer cake, just frost the top and middle and forget the sides). And in some cakes, bars, and cookies, you can skip the frosting in favor of a light sprinkling of powdered sugar. Using 2 tablespoons of frosting instead of 4 will shave 130 calories, 4.5 grams of fat, and 2 grams of saturated fat. Each tablespoon of chocolate chips you skip cuts the calories by 50 per serving, the fat by 3 grams, and the saturated fat by almost 2 grams.

9. **Switch to "smart fat" ingredients when possible.** Certain fats, when used in moderation, actually have health benefits! Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish and some plant foods like canola oil and ground flaxseed), as well as oils that contain monounsaturated fats (like olive and canola oil) and foods high in monounsaturated fats (like avocado and almonds) may help protect against heart disease. In recipes, you often have a choice of which oil or margarine to use. You can also add fish to some entree recipes instead of red meat. When a recipe calls for melted butter or margarine, you can often substitute canola or olive oil. Foods fortified with or containing omega-3s are starting to pop up in several aisles in the supermarket, including low-fat milk, eggs, and multigrain pastas.